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PRESTON PAPERS

(From the originals in the Virginia State Library)

JOHN WATKINS TO WILLIAM PRESTON.

War Office May 5th 1782

Sir

I now inclose you the order for powder which Colonel Davies mentions in his last to you; and which was neglected to be sent by Mr. McGavock—

I am, Sir

Your most Obdt Sert

John Watkins

[Address]

[Address]

Colonel William Preston

Montgomery

Capt. Pearis

Wm Davies Lt

WILLIAM LEWIS TO CO. LT. MONTGOMERY CO.

War Office May 6. 82

Sir,

In consequence of the invasion of the frontiers, his Excellency in council has thought proper to direct that all the six months men from the frontier counties should be returned to their respective settlements, and serve the remainder of their time out in their counties. You will therefore be pleased to give the men, of which a list is enclosed, such a length of furlow for the men to take care of their families, as you may think proper, after which you will order them on duty.

I am Sir,

Your most Obdt Servt

William Davies

[Address]

County Lieutenant

Montgomery

Field Officers for Montgomery and Washington Counties.

Montgomery Courthouse, July 2d 1782

At a meeting of the Field Officers of the Militia of Montgomery and Washington Counties in conformity to instructions received from His Excellency the Governor bearing date 15th day of June last: to concert and settle some proper plan for the defence of both counties—Present

William Preston; Walter Crockett; Joseph Cloyd; Daniel Trigg; John Taylor, Jr.; Abraham Trigg: Field Officers for Montgomery County.

Arthur Campbell; William Edmondson; Aaron Lewis; James Dysart: Field Officers of Washington County

and

Major Patrick Lockheart, District Commissioner—

It is the unanimous opinion of the Board of Officers That the 200 men permitted to be drawn out by His Excellency the Governor, for the defence of the frontier have divided the same into the following Districts viz.

On New River in the neighborhood of Capt Pearis 30 Men. Sugar Run 20, Capt. Moore's Head of Blue Stone 25, Head of Clinch 25 Men—

In Washington at Richlands 20, Castle Woods 30, Rye Cove 20, Powell's Valley 30 Men. The extent of the different Districts. From Capt. Pearis to Sugar Run 10 Miles to Capt. Moores Head of Blue Stone 30 to Capt. Maxwells, Head of Clinch 16 Miles, which is nearest the Washington line. To Richlands 24, to Castle Woods 30, to Rye Cove 28, to Powells Valley Fort 26 Miles in all 164 miles We find the greatest difficulty in making any provision for the support of those men while on duty as there is no specific tax brought into the places appointed for that purpose in either of the Counties. The Officers have therefore recommended it to Major Lockheart the District Commissioner to purchase 200 bushels of Corn in Montgomery County at the most convenient places

to where the Militia are to do Duty at three Shillings per Bushel being the current price, and an equal quantity in the County of Washington for the use of the Troops and at the most convenient places at the current prices there, which we are convinced will be a great saving to the State as the Transporting of grain from Botetourt, where there is some belonging to the Publick on hand, to the several Districts where the Militia are to do duty, will be attended with a very great expense the distance being from sixty to One hundred and sixty miles. To procure what further supplies of provisions that may be necessary it is to be an instruction to the Commissioners of the District to instruct the different County Commissioners and Commissaries of Specifices to deliver or facilitate the delivery of provisions to a Commissary of the Troops for each County to be appointed for that purpose or to the order of the Commanding Officers. To which may be added a Warrant to each Commissary to impress agreeable to the Invasion Law as objections have been made to that part of the Governors instructions ordering the direction of the Militia of both Counties, while on duty, under that of the County Lieutenant of Montgomery who lives upwards of 180 miles from Powells Valley and not less than 90 miles from the Richland District in Washington which renders it impossible and useless for him to have these men under his direction for which reason he declines that part of the Command. Let it therefore be humbly recommended to His Excellency the Governor to alter that part of his orders by giving the Superintendance of the Troops in each County to the Commanding Officers of the same as it will save the expense of a Field Officer being on Duty which otherwise would be necessary; and the Defence of the Frontiers will in all probability be better Conducted.

The Board of Officers are unanimously of opinion that the Counties of Montgomery and Washington will provide the number of men ordered for their Defence without calling on any of the neighboring Counties for assistance unless there is a real occasion to do so on some emergency; or on the approach of a large body of the Enemy.

They also beg leave to suggest that the usual manner the Indians conduct their attack on our Settlements makes it necessary that a proper number of Scouts be employed in each District to discover their approaches for which reason it has induced the Officers to direct that two be employed in each District for the immediate safety of the Inhabitants.

Signed by Order

Wm Preston

[Endorsement]

Proceedings of the Board of Officers at Fort Chiswell, 2 July 1782.

INSTRUCTIONS TO COLONELS CROCKETT AND CLOYD.

Fort Chiswell July 3d 1782

Sir

The Board of Officers appointed to meet at this Place have directed that a Company of Militia be raised immediately and sent to the Frontiers of this County & to be stationed in the following manner to wit at Capt. Maxwells twenty five men & an equal number at Capt. Moores. In consequence of this resolution you will please to appoint an Active discreet Captain, to take the command of this Company as also two Lieutenants and an Ensign.—The Captain and Ensign to command at Maxwells & the two Lieutenants at the other place. These men are to continue ranging the Woods as much as in their power. Two Scouts or Spies are to be sent from each of these Districts & to be under the Direction of the Officers at the respective Stations. You will please to instruct the Officers to be very alert and active in their duty, to keep up good Discipline amongst their men and to be extremely careful to keep exact accounts of the receiving & issuing provisions & that the greatest Ecconomy be used as well with regard to Provision as ammunition.

This Company must be raised & kept out of the upper Batallion by Drafts or Enlistment untill the middle of October: I would earnestly recommend it you to endeavour to have the

men engaged for the whole time as it will save a great expense to the State and better answer the purpose of defending the Frontiers.

I beg that no time may lost in carrying this Business into Execution as the safety of Numbers depends upon it.—If anything extraordinary happen in those Districts be pleased to inform me thereof.—Should you be informed of the approach of a large Body of the Enemy you will please to take the most prudent and hasty steps to repell them.—The Field Officers and Captains in your Batallion are hereby required to give you every possible assistance in executing these Orders.

WILLIAM DAVIES TO WM. PRESTON.

War Office Aug 15—1782

Sir

I have never had a certain opportunity of acknowledging your favor of the 6th of last month, for which I am thankful to you—

His Excellency informs me he has himself signified to you his approbation of the measures you have concerted with the advice of the field officers of your County and Washington, and is satisfied with the propriety of your observations for declining the Superintendency in both,

I am sensible of the difficulties which will unavoidably occur in this Business, but would observe to you that many of these difficulties arise from the real mis-conduct of the public agents. You represent, and I am sure with justice, that transportation will be hardly accomplished for want of public horses: I must inform you however, that a certain Evan Baker of Washington was largely entrusted by the Government with the purchase of a large number of horses and other things for the Western defence—but that man has never yet been brought to account, though various applications have been made to him, and tho' there is great reason to believe he retains many of these stores in his possession, or applies them

to his own advantage. I must request the aid of your influence to bring this man forward a little, that he may settle his account of the distribution of horses and so forth, with Major Lockheart. I have been told a large number of horses were also purchased by Mr. Maddison. Possibly he may have several by him yet—

With most sincere wishes for the permanent security of your County, I remain Sir, with most respectful esteem,

Your very obedient Servant

Col. W. Preston William Davies

[Endorsement]

Col. Davies Letters—Aug. 15—1782

(To be continued)